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JANUARY 2017 | CSA San Diego County

The Advocate

CSA Welcomes a New Cohort of Syrian Refugees

Escaping the terror and violence in Syria, refugees find a new beginning in East County San Diego

Imagine being in your home going about your usual day when you suddenly hear an uproar in the streets: a mixture of horrifying screams, dark smoke filling the atmosphere, and loud booming noises. Chaos ensues, people are running for their lives. Children are left behind, some are killed by more oncoming bombs, while the rest run and try to seek shelter. This is life in Syria where death lurks around the corner and the possibility of not making it to the next day is very real.

Though it is a quite well-known issue world-wide, CSA San Diego County seeks to raise awareness in East County and welcome a new cohort of refugee families to the community. Through these humanitarian efforts CSA seeks to promote a warm welcome, positive attitudes, acceptance, and equal opportunity for all. To show this warm welcome CSA is aiding these families through clothing and bedding donations and providing them with rental assistance. This was all made possible through the generous clothing and monetary donations local San Diegans made in the efforts to assist these new refugee families.

Pictured below are the heads of three different households holding up a check for rental assistance along with CSA's Executive Director and a translator. All three men shared their story in regards to the suffering they have overcome and their family's journey in seeking refugee status. Their stories are stories of pain, heartbreak, loss and uncertainty. However, when asked what message they would like to share they expressed their deepest gratitude for CSA and the American government for welcoming them and their families with open arms. CSA in return is also grateful for having the opportunity to help these refugee families finding settlement in East County and hopes to continue assisting more families with the help of more generous donors. If you provided a donation to CSA for the Syrian refugee's families this past month, on the behalf of CSA, its staff, and the Executive Director, we thank you for all your contributions and we salute you!

A New Life and a Better Future

Human trafficking survivor recounts his heartbreaking and dismal experience



Santiago Perez Navarro came to United States in 2006 to seek a better quality of life for himself and his family. To do this, he had to leave his wife and two children, a 4 year old son and a 9 month old daughter, behind in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. Though he was afraid of kidnappings Santiago made the sacrifice to cross over and seek new experiences.

The coyote (someone who illegally smuggles people across the border,) took him to Encinitas, California where he lived and shared food with 10 other day laborers. His first job was as a gardener until he found another job at a restaurant. Since the day labor work was dependent on the weather and how many people were to be picked up for that particular day, Santiago figured that working in a restaurant was more stable so he sought more work in the food service industry. In 2010, he began to work at a Taco Shop and this is when his nightmare began. The employer would force Santiago to work 12-14 hours a day, 6 days a week. Starting pay was \$8.00 an hour and it was common for weeks to go by without receiving a paycheck. And yet the work included all the duties of a cook, dishwashing, purchasing the food items, and cleaning up. On weekends, he catered events to appease his employer. She also demanded that he clean houses with her in the evening. At these different houses, she would seduce him and force him to engage in sexual intercourse with her. Santiago felt helpless and disgusted with himself and his life. His journey further worsened when a series of trips to a witchdoctor began. At these rituals, Santiago was exposed to horrific animal sacrifices and threats.

In 2013, Anti-Human Trafficking advocate, Estela DeLosRios and an FBI agent came to his door to interview him. Santiago was very paranoid, distrustful, and afraid. The interview lasted a total of 3 hours and eventually, Santiago poured out his fears and his concerns. After assessing his needs, CSA San Diego County was able to refer him to receive a holistic array of services that included psychological help and legal assistance.

In 2016 Santiago received his T-Visa from USCIS. He is now very happy, grateful, privileged and honored to be part of a national movement to combat human trafficking and to be a part of the solution. He looks forward to the day he can visit his family in Mexico and see that his sacrifices were not in vain.

Who we are >>>



CSA San Diego County is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the needs of our community. We serve as advocates for fair housing and mediating tenant/landlord issues. Through the Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) we also assist clients who have grounds to believe they are victims of housing discrimination by conducting investigations of these claims. We are dedicated to promoting fair housing laws and equal housing opportunity and enforcing it.

Other issues CSA addresses include: hate crime prevention, civil rights of first generation immigrants, human trafficking, youth education, and voter education. All of the services we provide are at no cost to our clients.

Our team is comprised of dedicated volunteers, passionate staff, and a trail-blazing executive director.

Our mission is to promote positive attitudes and action that ensure respect, acceptance, and equal opportunity for all people. We are profoundly committed to ensure the well-being of all San Diego County residents.

For more information please contact us at

1-800-954-0441

Or visit our website

www.c4sa.org

YOU Have the Rights to Reasonable Accommodations

Requesting a Reasonable
ACCOMMODATION



One question that frequently gets asked by tenants is *what is reasonable accommodation?* What it means is that the manager or landlord must allow an exception to a rule or policy if it would afford a disabled tenant an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling unit, including public and common use areas. If the manager or landlord refuses to make a reasonable accommodation in rules, policies, or services, it is a violation of the Fair Housing Act. The only exception to denying reasonable accommodation is if it imposes an undue financial or administrative burden on a housing provider or if it requires a fundamental alteration in the nature of its program.

Some things to know about reasonable accommodation is that the owner or manager *can* request verification that the tenant or applicant is disabled and needs the requested accommodation to use and enjoy the apartment or community. However, they *cannot* request information about the nature, extent, or severity of a person's disability. If you make a reasonable accommodation request and the housing provider delays responding to the request after a reasonable amount of time, the delay may be construed as a failure to provide reasonable accommodation and a violation of the Fair Housing Act.

A prime example of this occurred in the City of El Cajon wherein a 90 year old client with a disability that requires him to use a wheelchair and a ventilator was denied a parking space numerous times by the site manager. With the aid of CSA's fair housing counselors and some mediation, the man was eventually granted a parking space upon management's recognition that they had committed a violation of the Fair Housing Act. Though it may seem a small detail, this is a common issue that exists in housing. Many times tenants do not know their rights and they lose their equal housing opportunities due to a lack of education. If you would like to learn more about your fair housing rights and prevent a violation of them, visit us online at www.c4sa.org or visit the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) online at www.hud.gov to learn more.



CSA Collaborates with Other Organizations to Host a Public Event for the Community

CSA contributes fair housing and civic engagement presentations and workshops



CSA San Diego County recently had the opportunity to collaborate with other organizations to host a free public assistance event for the community, and it had a great turnout with over 300 attendees. The purpose of the event was to reach out to the community and help them get connected to a variety of resources. The event, titled "Let's Connect Expo," welcomed and assisted attendees to apply for public assistance like Medi-Cal, CalFresh, and CalWORKS. In addition, there was a variety of workshops and presentations on employment, education, and child welfare services. CSA had the honor and opportunity to host a number of workshops and presentations on fair housing education and issues, and civic engagement. Through civic engagement the attendees learned more about immigration. With a team that consisted of CSA's Executive Director, the Fair Housing Manager, and a few Fair Housing Counselors, the agency was fully prepared to educate the community and answer their questions and concerns regarding fair housing. Hundreds of families learned a lot more about the resources that are available for them and the agencies like CSA San Diego County that exist to help educate them on their rights. CSA is excited to continue being a part of events like this this New Year and helping community members learn their rights.

A Message from the Executive Director, Estela DeLosRios

As we begin 2017, may we continue to embrace our fellow human beings with kindness, peace, and cheer for a better tomorrow. I hope that every day in the New Year serves to achieve success for all and mutual goodwill.

CSA San Diego County remains committed to working hard and persevering to achieve positive changes in the community and desired success.

May all your endeavors be met with huge success and appreciation. Have a Happy New Year!



Below, free-childcare and breakfast is provided for attending children



Lincoln Leaders in the Spotlight: Gabriel Rosas

Pictured below, Gabriel celebrates his 15th birthdate at one of the sessions with Lincoln Leaders



Gabriel Rosas is a fifteen year old teenager who has persevered and overcome many challenges and barriers in his life. From waking up at 3am every morning to cross the San Diego-Tijuana, Mexico International Border every day, six times a week, to confronting violence and unrest within the pedestrian lines, to hopping on a trolley and a bus to get to school to barely make it on time to school and sometimes being late, Gabriel faces a long and burdensome journey every day. Though he comes from a stressful low-income and single parent household, Gabriel fights to persevere and not become another statistic. He does his best to keep his grades up, he knows his boundaries and he remains alcohol and drug free. He has no gang affiliations and he has a deep passion for learning new things and reading.

So much in fact, that he sacrifices his Saturday's and takes it upon himself to cross the border on a day when he doesn't have to, just to spend it at the library reading the whole day. These barriers *should* break his will to learn and push him to drop out of school, but Gabriel never gives up. He enjoys being a part of Lincoln Leaders and has continued to attend for two years now, never missing a single day. His favorite memory with Lincoln Leaders is taking a field trip to the University of California of Los Angeles and witnessing a whole new world that he never knew existed. It was there that he discovered that someone like him could actually go to college. He was so impacted by the stories of some of the students there and the diversity of the campus, that he now believes more in himself than ever before. It is stories like his that encourages Lincoln Leaders to continue impacting the lives of these teenagers at-risk and making a difference in their lives. Seeing them succeed despite their barriers and challenges drives Lincoln Leaders to continue being a beacon of hope and encouragement to those who find themselves in need of support.



CSA San Diego County proudly serves the following cities:

- Carlsbad
- Chula Vista
- El Cajon
- La Mesa
- National City
- Santee

For Housing Discrimination & Investigation Services CSA San Diego County proudly serves the entire San Diego region

Local Resources

CSA San Diego County
131 Avocado Avenue
El Cajon, CA 92020
(619) 444-5700
1-800-954-0441

Other Fair Housing Resources

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
Fair Housing Division
600 Harrison Street, 3rd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94107
(800) 347-3739

California State Department of Fair Employment & Housing
611 West Sixth Street, Room 150
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(800) 233-3212

CSA San Diego County Hosts a Fair Housing Outreach Event in National City

Great turnout of engaged residents' and landlords hints at more future workshops in National City



On December 21, 2016 CSA's fair housing manager and an accompanying housing counselor hosted an outreach event at the Lincoln Acres Community Building in National City. They spoke and held a presentation on the rights and responsibilities of onsite managers and tenants. The updated laws on housing were also discussed. While the group in attendance was small they were very attentive and had many questions about the pertaining topics. They found the presentation to be highly informative and very detailed, and for those reasons CSA is proud to continue informing the community on their housing rights and arming them with the tools they need to continue living safely and with equal housing opportunities. If you are a tenant, a manager, or a landlord, and would like more information about our fair housing workshops and events please call our main office at (619) 444-5700, check out website at www.c4sa.org, or visit us in person at 131 Avocado Avenue, El Cajon, CA 92021.

Nos Dijeron: "Vivan En Otro Sitio." Tenemos derechos. Llamamos a HUD.



Visita hud.gov/fairhousing o llama a la línea directa de HUD 1-800-669-9777 (English/Español) La Equidad de Vivienda es Tu Derecho. Úsalo.

2017 Happy New Year